

614-BB-B-0.9 Periodic Reports General Command B" 1st to 1st November 1941

Jan 11/5
Meester

HISTORY
HEADQUARTERS COMBAT COMMAND "B"
14TH ARMORED DIVISION, APO # 446
U. S. Army

Period: 1 January 1945 - 31 January 1945

On New Year's Day, 1945, the Combat Command, consisting of the 19th Arm'd Inf Bn, the 25th Tk Bn, Troop "A" of the 94th Cav Ren Sq, and Hq & Hq Co CCB, with Co "B" of the 84th Med Bn and Co "C" of the 136th Ord Maint Bn in support, was in assembly area in the vicinity of BOUXWILLER, its CP in a tavern at HATTMATT.

At 0540 the 19th Arm'd Inf Bn, plus Co "A" of the 25th Tk Bn, moved to the vicinity of BAERENTHAL and was released to TASK FORCE HUDDLESON. At 1100 the 47th Tk Bn was attached to the command, and at 1715 Troop "A" of the 94th was released to division control.

At 0707 CCB was alerted to move on short notice. The first elements began to march at 1130, and by midnight all units had closed in their new positions, prepared to repel enemy movement between south of the NIEDERBRONN - INGWILLER passes to the northwest. CP CCB opened in a school in NIETESHEIM.

On this day Chaplain Sexton was promoted to Captain, and Captain Prince to Major.

The following day, CCB continued to perform its mission of guarding the mountain passes within its zone, with the 25th Tk Bn blocking those in the vicinity of ZINSWILLER-ROTHBACH-INGWILLER, the 47th Tk Bn those in the vicinity of NIEDERBRONN and NEHWILLER.

Meanwhile plans were formulated for the repulse of any possible counter attack, and Co "C" of the 47th was given the assignment of reconnoitering possible routes and positions for use in the event of a counter attack.

At 2100 Troop "A", 94th Cav Ren Sq, was again attached to the command.

On the 3 January the 47th Tk Bn was released from its attachment to CCB, and reverted to division control. It continued, however, to reinforce CCB. At 1500 the 62nd Arm'd Inf Bn was attached to the command.

Our troops continued to block the mountain passes in our zone, and to patrol routes north. At 1700 CP CCB moved to ZUTZENLORF, where it remained for the duration of the first phase of the month's operations.

CCB remained on guard over the passes through the tenth of January. During this period also the Command maintained active patrols and reconnoitered possible routes for employment in the event that either division plan 6 or division plan 7 were to be put into execution.

At 0730 31 January, CCB was placed on a thirty minute alert, and the

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BY *Al Huddleby Capt AGC*

second phase of the month's operations began. With Co "B" of the 125 Engrs attached, and the 499th Armd F A Bn in support, the command marched, beginning at 0910, to an assembly area in the vicinity of WOERTH-BIBLISHEIM, a new CP being opened at a hotel in the vicinity of GUNSTETT.

A reconnaissance of routes to the south and east was immediately instituted, and by 1600 it had been completed.

At 2030 a warning order was issued, and at midnight the attack order itself was distributed to the units of the command.

In substance the plan was as follows: CCB was to march, beginning at 0530 12 January, to an attack position in the vicinity of HOHWILLER. By 0900 it was to be prepared to attack in column of battalions, on order of Hq CCB, its mission the restoration of the main line of resistance in its zone. The 62nd, after making contact with friendly infantry elements along the line of departure, was to attack HATTEN from the North, to protect the 25th as it by-passed the town. The 25th was to by-pass both RITTERSHOFFEN and HATTEN and restore the main line of resistance. Meanwhile A-94 (-) was to screen the east flank of the attack position, and then, after being passed through by the 62nd, protect the south flank, our zone. Both the 499th and the 62nd were to smoke the left flank. B-125 was to be prepared to lay mines and demolitions against any enemy crossings of the SELTZBACH RIVER in our zone.

The scheduled attack jumped off at 1130, 12 January. By 1300 the 62nd had reached positions 1000 yards east of the line of departure, and had dug in under heavy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire. Heavy artillery and anti-tank fire were encountered by the 25th, too, and eventually all troops were forced to withdraw behind the line of departure. The leading elements of the tank attack had crossed the STUNDWILLER - HATTEN road prior to withdrawal. That night the positions were outposted, and preparations were made for another attack at 0745 the next day.

During the day Hq CCB operated two CP's. The forward CP, consisting of the Combat Command Commander, his Executive Officer, S-3, and S-2, with two tanks, two half-tracks, and two quarter tons, marched immediately behind the 62nd, and established CP's successively in HOHWILLER and KUHLEN-DORF, receiving considerable artillery fire in the latter town. At nightfall the forward CP rejoined the rear CP at HOHWILLER, and a headquarters was established in a tavern there, where it remained throughout the operation.

On the morning of the 13th of January, the 25th (-) conducted two indirect fire missions on ASCHBACH-STUNDWILLER-BUHL, one at 0745 and one at 1010. Meanwhile Co "C" of the 25th was given the mission of cutting the roads to the north and northeast of HATTEN, and launched three attacks to accomplish this. Such a large amount of heavy artillery, 88 millimeter, anti-tank, and mortar fire was encountered, however, that the company was forced to withdraw to its original position, and at 1500 the mission was recalled. When recalled, it had lost five tanks destroyed by enemy fire.

During one of these attacks, the Executive Officer of CCB accompanied the attacking company in his light tank. The tank became immobilized in a shell crater. Attempts to evacuate it were unsuccessful, and eventually heavy artillery fire forced the crew to abandon it. After assisting a seriously wounded man from another tank off the field, the executive officer and his crew escaped safely, the only casualty being the driver, who

sustained a slight shrapnel wound.

That night a small group of men from Hq Co CCB attempted to recover the tank and its equipment, but heavy fire made it impossible to do so. This sortie resulted in another casualty, when the reconnaissance sergeant of the company was slightly wounded by shrapnel.

While the tank elements were thus engaged, the 62nd held its line and improved its defensive position. Its assault guns, too, assisted the attack by firing smoke on known enemy positions. Active patrolling featured the defense.

From the 14th to the 16th of January CCB maintained and improved its defensive positions. The 25th placed unobserved fire on enemy targets and supported with its fires the attacks of CGA and CCR. Many tank combat patrols operated from LEITERSWILLER to the east, attempting to cut roads out of HATTEN to the north. On the night 14-15 January, B-125 laid a hasty minefield forward of the 62nd. On the 15th and 16th, platoons of D-25 went forward to observe, develop, and report enemy positions. Meanwhile plans were being formulated for the repulse of any possible enemy counter attack from the north, northeast, or southeast.

On the 17th of January the command supported the attacks of CGA and CCR, and continued to maintain aggressive patrols in the area east of the LEITERSWILLER-RITTERSHOFFEN Road. 3-D-25, which had gone forward to observe, develop, and report on enemy dispositions and concentrations along the general line SELTZBACH RIVER, was joined by a section of medium tanks and destroyed one enemy tank and one enemy truck.

Probing of the enemy by patrols and development by fire were continued on the 18th and 19th. One enemy tank was destroyed by 3-B-25 on the 18th, and one enemy tank and three half tracks by C-25 on the 19th.

At 2040 of the 19th, TASK FORCE LUCAS was organized, consisting of 3-B-125, C-94, and A-48, to act as division reserve. It was disbanded soon afterwards when the withdrawal started.

At 1830, 25 (-) with C-62 attached was attached to the VI Corps and marched to the vicinity of HOCHFELDEN.

On the 20th of January the division was ordered to disengage from the enemy. At 1500 the 62nd, which throughout the day had been holding its line, harassing reported enemy positions by fire, and actively patrolling east of the main line of resistance, was released from its attachment to CCB and attached to CGA. At the same time, the 68th Armd Inf Bn was relieved from CGA and attached to CCB.

Beginning at 1600, the command marched, mostly by infiltration, to a new assembly area in the vicinity of DETTWILLER. The march was made in a near blizzard, and over extremely icy roads. Nevertheless, by 1300 of the 21st of January the entire command had closed in the new area, the disengagement from the enemy having been accomplished without incident.

CP CCB was set up in FURCHHAUSEN.

On the 22nd of January a reconnaissance of routes to the north, northeast, and east was made, in anticipation of a possible move.

The third phase of our operations for the month commenced on the 23rd of January, when the command moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of MORMENHEIM, its mission to prepare to repel counter attacks in the zones of the 36th and 79th Infantry Divisions.

CCB troops at the beginning of this operation, with their dispositions, were as follows: 68th Armd Inf Bn, with B-25 and 1-B-125 attached, - BATZENDORF; 25th Tk Bn, with A-68 and 3-B-125 attached, - HUTTENDORF; B-125 (-), - WAHLENHEIM; Hq & Hq Co CCB, - WITTERSHEIM. B-84, with its CP at MARMOUTIER, and C-136, with its CP at SAVERNE, continued to support the command. CCB Trains were moved from REUTENBOURG to LITTENHEIM.

During the next day, the troops of the command, on a one-hour alert status, outposted their respective towns and reconnoitered roads and bridges to the north, northeast, and east. B-125 commended the sanding of icy roads.

Meanwhile the Combat Command Commander and his staff were preparing plans for counter attacks within the zones of the 36th and 79th divisions, and coordinating these plans with the divisions involved.

On the 25th of January, at 0740, CCB, with D-94 attached, and the 499th in support, was attached to the 79th Division as part of Task Force WAHL. The command moved to an attack position in the vicinity of SCHWEIGHAUSEN, an advance CP being established at BATZENDORF.

The 68th, which had been given a fragmentary attack order at 1000, launched its attack at 1230, its mission being to seize and hold the ground between (Q981257) and (Q990250), thus restoring the main line of resistance. The troops advanced from OHLUNGEN to the northeast, by-passing SCHWEIGHAUSEN. By dark they had reached a point in the vicinity (Q989252). Lacking facilities to maintain this position, the battalion asked for, and received permission to withdraw to the line (Q985240)-(Q994248), where the troops dug in.

Meanwhile the 3rd platoon of Co "A" of the 25th, with one squad of Co "A" of the 68th, had moved out as a combat patrol, with the mission of clearing the enemy from the woods southwest of SCHWEIGHAUSEN and protecting the right flank. This mission was accomplished by 1500, and at 2000 the platoon returned to the attack position. Many minor missions were accomplished by this combat patrol.

On the following day, the attack was resumed. The 68th, which had the mission of restoring the main line of resistance in the vicinity (Q976255) - (Q993248), advanced through deep snow, during a heavy snow storm. No enemy resistance was met, and by 0930 the objective had been reached. The battalion filled dug-in positions along the road on the objective until it was relieved by elements of the first battalion of the 314th Infantry Regiment at 1545.

Of the other elements of the command, 2-A-25, plus 1 section of A-68, supported the third battalion of the 232nd in an attack north from OHLUNGEN. However, only light enemy resistance was encountered, and the platoon was not committed.

The result of this operation in support of the 79th was a clear-cut complete victory. The enemy was driven north, after suffering heavy per-

sonnel casualties in killed, wounded, and prisoners, while our casualties were relatively light. The enemy never returned to this area, which indicates the ferocity and completeness of this attack of CCB.

Upon completion of its mission with Task Force WAHL, the Combat Command returned to its assembly area in the vicinity of MOMMENHEIM, where it remained on short alert for the rest of the month.

The plans and reconnaissance for counter attacks to the north, east, and south were resumed. Plans for a future operation with the 36th Infantry Division were made and coordinated with division, and maps and aerial photos of the terrain east of BISCHWILLER were studied.

By the end of the month everything was in readiness for the attack with the 36th to the east and south. At noon of the 31st of January, the Combat Command was attached to the 36th, and in the afternoon an advance party established a forward CP at BISCHWILLER. All combat elements of the command were prepared to move to the assembly area in the vicinity of BISCHWILLER on the following day.